

as the churchmen boasted, had incurred the disapproval of \* knighthood' and ' turned to confusion the sorry sect of Lollardry.'<sup>1</sup>

The defection of wealthy patrons is also to be partly attributed to the characteristic poverty which marked all the priests of Wycliffe's sect, in accordance with his sweeping denunciation of Church possessions. Although the Poor Priests did not incite the lower classes against their more fortunate neighbours, they were themselves, as their name portends, men of no position and no property. The ideal which Wycliffe had prescribed for his missionaries was that of the seventy disciples whom Jesus sent out. They were not allowed to take money with them on their journeys, but were to depend on friends for food and lodging ; they were not, like the friars, to take a bag with them in which to carry off alms either in kind or money ; they were merely to accept the necessities of life as each day required. In how many cases these precepts were strictly followed it is hard to say, but they were practised at least to some extent, and such a life had few attractions .to priests of any save the poorest class. The choice of Lollard missionaries must thereby have been limited, and limited to that part of the clergy which was on the whole the least learned and the least trained. The first preachers of the sect, Hereford, Purvey, Aston and Brute, had been scholars and theologians ; but more and more as time went on the priests were simple, poor men, and no great Lollard divine succeeded Wycliffe. The religion became almost exclusively one for the lower classes of the country and the tradesmen of the towns. The lords, courtiers and knights gradually withdrew their patronage, partly because they so seldom found, among the ministers of the sect, any one who was socially their equal or educationally their superior.

Yet in spite of these tendencies Lollardry had no connection with socialism or even with social revolt. If, at the time of the Peasants' Eising, any of the Lollard preachers, misrepresenting or disregarding Wycliffe's opinions, had attacked lay property and the rights of the manor lords, they soon ceased to do so. We possess reports of the proceedings

<sup>1</sup> *Pol. Poems*, i: 247.